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22 December 1988

NOTE FOR: Bob Blackwell

RE: Scenarios

I'm convinced by the Arlie conference and several conversations there that we won't get quality cooperation or useful results if we adhere rigidly to the scenario approach, especially if we try to impose it on intellectually serious and respected people whose imaginative thinking we are trying to enlist. We have to have some kind of process that focuses on a) the driving forces or factors at work, e.g., nationalism, conservatism of elite and populations, etc.; and b) the range and likelihood of possibilities, e.g., what is Gorbachev's model of success and how likely is it.

Then, I think our approach to scenarios ought not to be a simple list -- that is a turnoff to most collaborators or an invitation to novel writing. Rather we should identify classes of scenarios or outcomes, and then subsets or branches that vary them. For example,...

Successful reform branching into a "Leninist" model presumably sought by Gorbachev, or a more liberal, Western-looking model presumably sought by Sakharov and the liberal dissidents, or halting at a more modest stage of economic and political revival.

Various forms of conservative backlash: A) Gorbachev becomes Andropov or even Stalin. B) A conservative coup within the Politburo a la 1957 or 1964. C) A military intervention.

A range of disintegrative possibilities: More or less orderly evolution toward a confederal system, perhaps a variant of success. The Yugoslav model. Social revolution and/or nationalist revolution.

Throughout all this we shall be forced to recognize that there are no endpoints clearly discernable except with the backlash scenarios, and even they may fuel more trouble later.


Fritz Ermarth

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